



## **Inspirational Health Stories**

### **Bob Harrington, from Alexandria, Virginia**

Robert “Bob” Harrington is an inspiration. His “energizer bunny” mentality is the envy of even forty-somethings! For over ten years, Bob has been teaching senior aerobics at the Springfield Senior Center. He wasn’t always so active. He started teaching when the previous instructor, his wife, became ill. He didn’t want to let her class down, but he had no idea how to teach. She sat and guided him while he struggled through the first few classes – and then he found that he really enjoyed it – losing weight, feeling good, more energy – he was hooked! He took classes at the local community college to learn more about fitness and teaching, and the class size grew. Although he has been offered numerous times to become a paid staff member, Bob declines the offer.

He loves what he is doing – inspiring others to lead healthy lifestyles. “It takes a lot of work to keep these old machines going, but it can be fun, too – great music from the 40’s, and camaraderie – grabbing life one day at a time!” Bob doesn’t say that lightly, either. He struggled with prostate cancer and treatment and STILL rarely missed teaching his “groupies”. Attendance at his class is never less than 20, often much more than that – the room is packed – and still they come, for his sense of humor, individual attention, and a tough, age appropriate work out.

Every year, the senior center participates in the Food & Nutrition Program’s Fitness Challenge, and Bob grabs the reins and steers the group to the lead. He encourages them to fill out the entry forms and follow through. “You can’t just diet if you expect to lose weight, you have to move it, too!” He leads by example, filling his exercise log out for others to see, and assisting the other participants fill out theirs. His pride in them while distributing the polo shirt prizes was heartwarming - even people with age related physical challenges participated, and his praise and encouragement gave them hope.

When Bob was still in high school, WWII broke out. Bob persuaded his mother to sign the release form so he could enlist. He joined the navy and proudly served his country for the duration of the war. Upon his return, he went back to high school, by now older than the other students, and completed his degree. His tenacity has been a lifetime trait. He met his wife, Polly, during the war, and their partnership is still strong. His family bonds

are an important part of his youthful outlook. He attends all of his grandsons soccer games and leads the cheering section. He is active in a pickle ball group at George Mason University and continues to take classes to update his teaching skills at Northern Virginia Community Colleges' Physical Education Department. He is a muse to us all, seniors and soon-to-be!